"To promote Christian ideals for agriculture and rural life; to interpret the spiritual and religious values which inhere in the processes of agriculture and the relationships of rural life; to magnify and dignify the rural church; to provide a means of fellowship and cooperation among rural agencies: *Toward a Christian Rural Civilization.*"

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TRADITION OF COMMUNITY LIVING

By Arthur E. Morgan*

HOW CULTURE SURVIVES**

It has been frequent experience that when a primitive people comes into intimate contact with modern civilization its entire social structure disintegrates and crumbles. In Hawaii, for instance, this disintegration continued unabated after the conversion of the whole people to Christianity with a shrinkage of the native population from an estimated 400,000 to less than 30,000.

A clear understanding of what occurs in such cases would be very useful, for the Western world today in coming into intimate contact with urbanism and technology is in considerable degree going through the same process as primitive people often do in meeting with Western civilization. If we could understand what caused the disintegration of the cultures of primitive peoples, we could better understand what is happening to our own.

The way of life of any stable society is the product of a long and slow growth. The cultural pattern of a people is an intricately interwoven and interrelated whole. It is maintained by social tradition and social inheritance and not by blood inheritance. Children unconsciously take over that pattern from their elders and continue it. If that cultural pattern is interrupted or if it is discredited in the eyes of the younger generation by the presence of a "superior" culture, then the younger generation may fail to take over the life pattern of the past and a general social disintegration may result.

From time immemorial the continuity of human culture in all societies has rested chiefly on the family and the small community or primary group. In that environment children were in intimate contact with their elders and unconsciously acquired for themselves the outlooks, habits, attitudes, and disciplines which had slowly been accumulated through long ages and which taken altogether constituted the culture or civilization of a people.

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* We are happy to present two significant statements by Dr. Morgan, director of Community Services, Inc., Yellow Springs, Ohio. These statements are used by kind permission of ***Community Service News, Yellow Springs, Ohio, and **Prophetic Religion, published by the Fellowship of Southern Churchmen, Chapel Hill, N.C.

Human culture and civilization are not inborn but are solely the resul of cultural transmission from generation to generation. The most important part of that culture is not "book learning" or the organized activities of society bu the informal and native habits, attitudes, disciplines, and outlooks which are u consciously transmitted from the older generation to the younger. To the degree that such cultural transmission is broken, culture and civilization disappear.

Today that transmission of basic culture is being much reduced and int rupted by the disappearance of old time family and small community life. As a r sult, we see everyday habits, standards, outlooks, and disciplines sagging to pri itive vulgarity and crudeness at the same time that specialized art, science, an economic production are reaching new peaks. In being unaware of the process by which basic human culture is perpetuated, we have failed to be concerned for the continuance of wholesome community and family life on which it depends.

Need for preservation of the community does not imply that the communi should be unchanging. The world moves and unless we move with it we become obso- lete. One of the chief reasons for the disintegration of cultures is that young people come to look upon their inherited culture as inferior and to despise it. Because the culture of the small community has inclined to be static, it has lost standing. To regain its prestige, especially with its young people, the communi must be awake and pioneering. It must intelligently and critically examine its background, keeping what has value and discarding what should be obsolete. Where that critical attitude does not exist, young people may uncritically throw away the whole tradition because of its obvious shortcomings.

Our recent course has tended to split society into two parts, neither of which can stand by itself. Urban life has been progressive and adventurous bu without roots and without the basic culture which keeps society alive. The small community has had the basic culture and character which keeps society alive but has been static. The city has represented progress, while the small community ha stood for stability and continuity. A wholesome stable society must combine thes two values. It must keep alive the great tradition of common community living bu also must constantly examine that tradition, fearlessly and critically. It must be aware of present-day movements, must eliminate from the old tradition what is clearly obsolete, and must weave into the growing tradition the substantial value that men have achieved along the way. Only in that way will it keep the loyalty and interest of alert young minds.

Truly prophetic religion will combine these qualities of preservation of the values of the past and of capturing the values of present and future. Onl the free mind and the consecrated spirit can achieve that combination.

WHAT CAUSES COMMUNITY?***

During the past fifteen years the literature on community has swollen wonderfully. For every book or article appearing then, a dozen or perhaps a scor are published today. A large part of these have to do with the technique of com- munity appraisal or organization. For nearly ten years past we have had heart- warming stories of community organization projects which, according to the storie have brought a new day to dead or dying communities. When we follow up these ac- counts six or eight years later, we find little trace of the social miracle which was so movingly described.

Practical Americans have little doubt but that with adequate funds, ski ful organization, and modern psychological technique almost any social result is

possible of achievement, at least on a pilot-plant scale. To find that actual results do not bear out that formula is disconcerting, almost as though the tribal god had failed.

We have organizations for training leaders, institutions and courses for leadership training, and guide books on the subject. With all this preparation should not a qualified community consultant go into a community and within a few weeks or a few months give it a direction and a momentum which will continue through the years? The answer apparently is, No! Turning the mystery of community over in our minds, we thought of some cases where interesting things have actually happened and of how they happened.

For instance, there is the case of John Frederic Oberlin. He might have been a fine community organizer, ranging over all France and Germany with his services. But he "threw himself away" by spending a working lifetime of more than fifty years in a little Alsatian mountain village.

The eighteenth-century Thirty Years War had destroyed perhaps nine-tenths of the population. The recovery of numbers had been slow. The general spirit was cynical, suspicious, and hopeless. Oberlin was not just a pastor. He undertook to promote schools for his parishioners, though his efforts were bitterly resented as tending to increase taxation. He sought to build a road out from the isolated valley but again was opposed for undertaking such a hopelessly ambitious project, until his own work with pick and shovel shamed his neighbors into helping him. The road was finished. Against general opinion that a preacher could know nothing about horticulture, he turned his rocky pasture into a fruitful orchard, bringing in improved varieties and providing an example which eventually was followed.

Oberlin rode out the French Revolution, approving freedom and the Republic but repudiating antireligion. Himself a Lutheran, he cooperated with Catholics and helped heal the deadly feuds of the wars. Himself an academic scholar, he made local education include every element of personal development -- physical, vocational and economic, literary and humanitarian, and ethical and spiritual. In his poverty-stricken parish he undertook to live a whole life and to bring the possibility of wholeness to all his people. At the end of his life he left behind a group of prosperous villages that had overcome the narrowness of ignorance and had come to be governed by a humane sense of brotherhood. Economic competence, thrift, and reasonable well-being had succeeded hopeless poverty. Along with these changes there had been implanted a spirit of intellectual freedom and reasonableness.

Arthur E. Morgan

In France about thirteen years ago a man, who had learned the trade of watchcase-making and developed a successful factory, undertook to start over again with a group of unskilled workers so that together they might discover a new way of life. His vision was not just of financial competence but of a group of friends who would together work out a good and effective way of life. Struggling to master problems of production, management, mutual understanding, and personal relations, they became an integrated group -- vigorous, self-respecting, and competent. They were not content with mere economic efficiency but proceeded to work out a common ethical code and an educational program which brought teachers to the

plant for classes in grammar, mathematics, singing, bookbinding, etc.

The principles worked out by this group, the Boimondau Community, have spread through France and helped start a movement of "communities of work," groups which share the same aims of joint ownership and management of factory or business, education for each member for his fullest possible self-development, and assistance to other "communities" when their own becomes strong enough to make more than a minimum living for its members.

As we follow up one after another of the more pretentious, well-financed and skillfully-planned campaigns for community organization, which yet have largely dissolved leaving very little trace, and ask ourselves what is missing in the formula, we are reminded of a comment of a wandering zealot in the Near East a considerable time ago, "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing."

Organization is desirable, but community is not organization. It is an attitude toward life and toward our fellows. Organization can make that spirit more effective, but organization without that quality is sterile.

The attitudes we acquire in our home communities come to control our relations with the wide world. Being practical realists, Americans have no doubt that on this mundane sphere, where "every man has his price," their dollars spent freely enough will buy anything they want in the field of international relations. In some degree, they are convinced the best use for dollars is for buying munitions supporting military programs for our allies, and establishing air bases at critical points over the world. Yet, the practical American is not narrow-minded. He would not omit cultural and spiritual values but in his national budget he would include two or three billion dollars worth of these. If that seems a high price to pay for the relatively intangible things, it should be remembered that he is not narrow-minded in such matters.

Just at present the practical American is perplexed over the fact that he seems not yet to have developed the right administrative methods for investing in these spiritual values. Two decades ago Americans were generally respected over the world. Today, after a few years of very generous spending partly for intangible spiritual values, he finds America becoming suspected and hated as never before in our history. This seeming ingratitude is puzzling. Hasn't America paid a big price and voluntarily -- such a price as no nation ever paid before -- for the good will of the world?

We know of one or two missionaries who, in India, did not take the customary course. They left comfortable mission centers and went to live with the villagers. When the question of freedom came up, they shared the aspirations of the Indians. We know one of these who, since freedom, has returned to India and has continued to identify himself with the common people of India, taking their part against native exploitation as he had against British control. In his case the social gap does not seem to exist, and he seems to be accepted as a friend.

Given such a spirit in Point IV, every dollar shared might do the work of ten. Without that spirit the total expenditures for the program may be negative. In case of students from some parts of Africa, two or three times as many are choosing to go to England, we are informed, as come to the United States because of the race discrimination here. Of those that do come to America, a considerable part return with bitterness rather than friendship for the same reason. Money investment alone, it seems, does not buy friendship.

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